EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION ON IMPACT OF CULTURE ON ADVERTISING STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT
Advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of goods, services, or ideas by an identified sponsor. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships between cultural dimensions and particular characteristics of advertising. From these perspectives, mass media and culture are closely related and are not easily separated. This paper examines the impact of culture on advertising from an ad content perspective by interpreting advertising messages and transcribing the embedded values on advertisements.

Keywords: Impact of Culture and Advertising


1. INTRODUCTION
Social media is a melting pot of different types of people with varying backgrounds and behaviours. With different people come different needs and different ways of thinking. Social media advertising is a term used to describe online advertising that focus on social networking sites. One of the major benefits of advertising on a social networking site is that Social Media Advertising advertisers can take advantage of the users demographic information and target their ads appropriately. Social media advertising combines current targeting options (like geotargeting, behavioural targeting, socio-psychographic targeting, etc.), to make detailed target group identification possible. With social media advertising, advertisements are distributed to users based on information gathered from target group profiles. Social advertisements offer the opportunity to build awareness, target based on geographic, demographic and behavioural data. As well, many of the ads can be contextually placed adjacent to relevant topics. Many of the platforms also offer remarketing opportunities for visitors who abandoned your site or shopping cart and returned to social.

Social Media is an upgoing trend. And for businesses it represents a marketing opportunity that transcends the traditional middleman and connects companies directly with customers. This is why nearly every business on the planet—from giants like Starbucks and
IBM to the local ice cream shop—are exploring social media marketing initiatives. A year ago, businesses were uncertain about social media. Now it's here to stay and companies are rapidly adopting social media marketing. Much like email and websites first empowered businesses, social media is the next marketing wave.

As the world is moving towards globalizations therefore many researchers and publications argue that products should be standardized across world along with standardization in advertising, which will in return decrease the influence of national cultures in advertisements However on the other hand large number of authors and researchers including Geert Hofstede and Markie de Mooij believe that national culture plays very important role in building perception, thinking and behaviors of consumers.

Culture is derived from Latin word “Cultura” meaning “cultivation” and was first used by Romans; however Germans practiced sociological meanings of culture two hundred years ago under the name of. Sir Edward Burnett Taylor, an English anthropologist in 1871 gave one of the earliest definitions of culture, which is used today as well. He defined cultures as: 11 “Complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, Customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as member of society”. The definition by Taylor is accepted and applicable now a day as well and it is quite broad as it includes “any other capabilities and habits”. Cultures differ from each other on basis of beliefs and values. Different cultures have different values and values which are important in one culture (group of people) may not be as important in another culture. So cultures affect the marketing behavior and urge the business organizations to promote their products and services according the certain/specific culture for promotion of products and services.

Values of a society dictate what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Some countries, such as the United States, are more individualistic, with citizens making purchasing decisions based on personal preferences. In other countries, such as Japan, people tend to make purchasing decisions based on the welfare of a group, such as the family. The way this plays out in marketing strategies is that ads focused on individuals do better in individualistic countries while group advertising works better in countries with collective group values.

1.1. Symbols and Symbolism
Symbols in relation to cultural influences refers to language, both spoken and unspoken. Language is a symbol of cultural pride. While some foreign influence may be acceptable, a culture may want to preserve its specific cultural heritage. A marketer would need to conform advertising in such a country into language symbols acceptable to the population of that particular country. Other forms of culture symbols include folklore, drama, dance and music.

1.2. Rituals
Rituals are patterns of behaviors that are learned and repeated. Rituals play an important role in how life events, such as births, marriages, graduations and funerals, are conducted in different cultures. Life is also full of smaller rituals such as watching a television show at a certain time or having dinner every Tuesday at your favorite restaurant. Rituals play an important role in marketing strategies as they focus on consumers' everyday interactions and how these interactions will play into the promotion and selling of a product or service.

The message can be communicated more effectively by incorporating cultural values in advertisements instead of standardizing the advertisements across global market and communication plays effective role in interacting consumer through advertising. If we want to know how advertising works across cultures, we’ll first have to learn how communication works. In advertising communication process, the basic purpose is to inform and persuade the
customer about the product. It is also important for business units to know about the liking, disliking, and preferences by the customer.

Media plays a major role in communicating advertising message across the audience, ignoring the media strategies can lead to delivering of great advertising message delivered in front of wrong audience. Media selection by strong media plan can lead to creation of powerful impact on the audience. While comparing three major media for marketing communication i.e. television, radio and magazine, television media provides greater impact than others by 7 combining sight and sounds with addition of offering more creative breadths. US alone in 2011 spent around 71.8 billion dollars for television advertisement with 283 million viewers in first quarter of 2012.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Thought processes may vary among different cultures. This could affect the way a marketing strategy is perceived. People who are part of one culture may take in the whole picture in an advertisement and be able to report specific details of what they have seen, even in the background; those of another culture may only see and identify with the central figure and ignore background items altogether. This would affect the way a marketer presents his message based on cultural thought processes.

2.1. Marketing and advertising.

Marketing is defined as: “What an organization must do to create and exchange values with “as “Marketing covers those activities that relate the organization to those parts of the outside world that use, buy, sell or influence the output it produces and the benefits and services it offers” Companies adopt marketing across globe which is known as international marketing which is basically allocation of resources by company without regard of national frontier. Through international marketing companies seek profits around the world through systematic and planned basis. Products are designed on the basis of customer needs of specific country and country based promotional efforts are done in international marketing.

Advertising is one of the marketing tools and paid form of communication designed to pursue the consumer. There are three basic functions of advertising “Inform” function of advertisement communicates product features, information, and location of sales. Basically it informs about new product to the consumers. The “persuasive” function of advertising actually tries to persuade consumer for purchase of product. As far as “reminder” function of advertisement is concerned, it helps to remind the consumer about the product so that customer don’t buy from competitors brand and remember the product.

2.2. Buyer’s Behavior and Advertisement

“Consumer behavior is the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires.” Consumer behavior in another way as, Consumer Behavior focuses on how individuals make decisions to spend their available resources (time money efforts) on consumption related items”.

Cultural values are one of integral part of consumer’s self and it is not an environmental factor. Needs and wants of consumers are changing rapidly with time and marketers should do efforts in recognizing the changing needs of consumers to grasp buying behavior of customers in better way. The first step is to understand the audience and then advertisement should be devised in such a way, that it should attract the target customer. And for this it is important to understand “buyer’s decision making process”
3. DECISION PROCESS
There are two groups in which customer can be split.

1. Business
2. Consumer buyers, Resellers, manufacturers, nonprofit institutions are included in business market where as consumer market includes households and individuals who purchase the product or the services for personal use.

There are series of stages involved in Buyers decision making process which is given below.

Need Recognition - A marketing professional or advertiser should try to influence the consumer decision by recognizing his/her original needs. And advertisement content should be made in such a way that it should depict clearly that the said product can satisfy the need of customer.

Information search - After need recognition by the consumer, he/she will start searching information regarding the product needed. If the customer has already tried the similar kind of product in the past then the starting point of the search will be the gathering the information from that point. Relatives, friends can also influence the buying behavior. Advertisements plays important role in attracting customer towards certain features of the product and gather information regarding that.

Alternative Evaluation- Emotional and rational approach plays important part in this phase because the buyer wants to get best in terms of quality, price and many other factors so he/she evaluate the alternatives available.

Purchase Now - when the buyer has looked upon all the alternatives, gathered all the required information, the next step is purchasing the product. This phase includes whether, where, when, what to buy. At this stage advertisement plays important role to keep buyer on his current decision and not letting him move from his decision.

Post purchase evaluation - After purchase customer formally and informally evaluates the product according to its features, usability and other features. The state of cognitive dissonance can occur when the buyer goes in state of doubt for large ticket items.

4. CONSUMER BEHAVIORS AND CULTURES
The process involved in consumer behavior is defined by De Mooij as “the study of process involved when people select, purchase, use, dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires. In this process various components are which are shown in diagram below.
Figure 1 Understanding Cultural Values of Customer

Everyone in a society holds the concept of “self”, which is image about our current personality and the personality we want to be. The idea of self, identity and image is linked to the concept of self. Cultural values play very important role in conception of consumer self. Individualistic cultures perceive the concept of self as “autonomous entity” and each person holds distinctive set of qualities, attributes or processes and behaviors are developed on basis of configuration of these attributes. For example youngsters in individualistic societies developed their identity to function independently in society apart from their family whereas in collectivist cultures the identity is developed by encouraging dependency and the complex relationships in the society exist which are very complex. In collectivist culture the concept of self is considered as “interdependent entity” developed and encompassed by social relations, so in collectivist cultures there are more “familial self”, “we” self. In masculine culture the concept of self is enhanced as “self esteem” whereas in feminine culture the concept of self is modesty (De Mooij: 2010). Personality can be defined as “sum of qualities and characteristics of being a person” (De Mooij 2010, p97). Personality of each person is unique in its own way having traits like autonomy and sociability; different people behave differently in different situations. In individualistic cultures persons have individualistic autonomous and independent characteristics combined with internal attributes (motives, abilities, traits and values) let them to behave in certain way. Whereas in collectivist cultures these factors are varied by impact of social roles, which in turn let them to behave in certain way? People belonging to different cultures have different personality traits. The recent model for studying variation in traits in different cultures is Four factor Model called ‘Big Four’ which these variations relate personality traits to Hofstede Cultural Model. The Four personality traits are extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism.

Discussing about social process steering consumer behaviors contains emotions and motivations and is bounded by cultures and variation in motives helps for development of advertisement appeals across cultures. Psychologists argue that Emotions (anger, fear, sadness, joy) are universal however the use of these emotions, meanings and intensity of the emotions vary according to specific cultures. According to study East Asian cultures tend to display positive emotions only e.g. joy and happiness. Mental process has also great impact on branding and communication, how people think, learn or communicate are mental/cognitive processes. Three kinds of processes are involved in cross cultural studies i.e. abstract versus concrete thinking, categorization and information processing. The collectivist culture members are inclined towards concrete features of product because they are not much used of conceptual thinking; however members of individualistic cultures are more inclined towards abstract brand features. The second process i.e. categorization is about categorization of people and objects by people on basis of individualism and collectivism. Individualistic cultures categorize on basis of rules and regulations whereas collectivist cultures categorize on basis of relationships among objects. Information processing varies along with individualism/collectivism and power distance. In high power distant and collectivist cultures
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people tend to gain information through implicit communication and prefer to buy product on basis of trust on company and feelings whereas people in low power distant and individualistic culture tend to gain information via friends and media for purchasing. Information flow automatically and frequently caused by social interaction and knowledge is acquired unconsciously “well informed” is co related with low context, individualism and low power distant culture.

5. MARKETING COMMUNICATION ACROSS CULTURES

The effective marketing communication model consists of sender, receiver and message which are connected to each other by the channel and the message may be distorted with distracting stimuli (noise). Perceptions are shared through marketing communication and it is successful only when the senders and receiver’s perceptual fields are congruent to each other.

![Communication Process](image)

**Figure 2 Communication Process**

As shown in the model the sender receiver and the message are connected by the message channel. The process of communication should start prior enquiry by marketer regarding potential customer/ receiver. The sender should study about characteristics of receiver for communicating message. Converting the message into symbolic form for understandability of receiver is encoding. Message channel is the way through which the message is send to the receiver and decoding is the process of transformation of symbols of message in the mind. In successful communication process sender and receiver’s reflection of needs overlap and it shows that communication process has worked. Noise is the distracting stimuli which interfere the accurate message reception. It is very important for international marketer to be aware of cultural noise (Czinkota & Ronkainen 2007). Perceptual encoding and decoding gaps originated from cultural differences between.

sender and receiver distort the communication between people belonging to different cultures. The more and better information regarding target audience, consumer behaviors, purchasing power, cultural values and demographic behaviors of the buyers can lead to development of better promotional strategy in international advertisement. (Root, 1994).

6. VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN CULTURES

Cultures vary in terms of Communication styles which are reflected in advertisements. Cultures differ in terms of direct and indirect communication styles for example individualistic cultures use more metaphors in communicating whereas collectivist cultures prefer indirect communication style. For example Korean LG commercial shows that an old man is sitting with a baby on top of the mountain will be thought as continuity and long term orientation whereas in U.S it will be considered in its original meanings. The impressive advertisement across cultures uses interpersonal style of communication. Ting Toomey and Gudkunst explains the way, variation in verbal communication style are described by cultural
dimensions. There are two main styles concerning importance of context i.e. “verbal personal style” and “verbal contextual style”.

Verbal personal style is related to individualistic centered language, enhances “I” identity and is mainly linked to low power distant cultures where status is equal. The verbal contextual style is role centered and focus on role identity related to context, and is linked with collectivist and high power distance societies. Rich and expressive language is used in elaborate verbal style whereas in exacting or precise style no more or less than required information is provided. There are long pauses more use of understandings, silences in succinct or understand style, and silence is meant to be having some meanings. Elaborate verbal style is mostly used mostly in high context cultures with use of metaphors, flowery expressions whereas exacting style is used in low context cultures with low uncertainty avoidance. Advertisements of individualistic cultures opt direct communication style by use of personal pronouns i.e. I, we whereas advertisements of collectivist cultures focus more on drawings, symbolism or metaphors.

Advertisement styles are mapped out by applying basis of interpersonal communication. Advertisement style of low power distant individualistic cultures is direct, explicit and personal commonly personalized lecture in advertisement with identified presenter for promoting the product and advertisements are carefully focusing on the endorser’s personality. Advertisements are more structured and serious in high uncertainty avoidance countries. There are detailed visuals along with the demonstration regarding use of product and such type of style is called Germanic style. Low uncertainty avoiding cultures depict more humor in advertisements, masculine cultures use celebrity endorsers.

7. ADVERTISEMENT ACROSS CULTURE

Cultures Understanding cultures is increasingly important for global advertising and Hofstede model of national is applicable to global advertising and marketing. The model explains various concepts of self, identity, personality which further helps in devising branding strategies (De Mooij, 2010). 15 Standardized advertisement across global market is not as much effective as adaptative strategies for local markets; therefore it has become increasingly important to understand the cultures (Dow, 2005). So cultural values depicted in advertising are integrated part of consumer self rather than environmental factor (De Mooij, 2010). Consumer self identity (culture, image, values) along with social and mental processes (previously described in consumer buying behavior) affect the advertising appeal and style. (De Mooij, 2010). Advertising reflects the pattern of our thinking, the way we do things in our daily life i.e. eating, relaxing, talking, working, having fun, things which moves us.

A number of researches are done for analyzing cross culture advertising mostly through content analysis and surveys to know which advertisement practice can work better in which country. The values incorporated in advertisement matching with values of the customer leads towards more successful advertising. Below is the conceptual analysis of Hofstede’s Model on basis of varying consumer behaviors.

In this globalisation era, organisations desire to increase their presence internationally by venturing into new business markets and so communication continues to play a crucial role in linking markets through flow of information, images and ideas. Taking this information into perspective, this thesis examines how culture can influence the international advertising strategy of a global organisation. The global organisation being considered in this thesis is Nike, Inc. The organisation is headquartered in the United States of America. It is the world’s leading supplier of athletic shoes and apparel and a major manufacturer of sports equipment.9 It is the general idea of this thesis to study if the American organisation Nike, Inc. considers the “cultural element” when designing their advertisements for the local and international
markets. With the help of intercultural communication theory a comparative analysis will be made on the selected print advertisements of Nike from the U.S. and Japan.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Investigation indicates either a partial adaptation or full localisation strategy is necessary for advertising in the Product market. When compared with a local competitor, the results showed a mixed outcome. For some MNCs, creative strategies applied were similar while some were different to those of local companies. Findings suggest that more cultural cues were visible in MNC ads.

REFERENCES


